

businesses are the ones that are hit the hardest.

Many of them are operating on a very narrow margin already. They have had to cut benefits and, in many cases, eliminate coverage altogether for their employees. Some of them have been forced to lay off workers because of the cost of health care. They simply can't sustain it; it eats into their profits and they can't stay in business. So it is no wonder that small businesses across America have said to us and have made it known that access to affordable health care is their No. 1 concern: access to affordable health care.

That is what this small business health insurance debate is all about. It is the guts, the thrust of the bill on the floor today. Small business owners want to take care of their employees and their families. They want to do everything they possibly can. Most small businesses are family affiliated, many of them family run, but it is becoming impossible to do in the face of increases that are so far greater than any margins they have, these double-digit increases in health insurance every year.

One survey reports that only 41 percent of firms with 9 employees or less can afford to offer health benefits, compared to 99 percent of large firms. That hurts the ability of small businesses to attract capable workers, to stay in business, to stay competitive in the larger marketplace. Unfortunately, the system is broken and small businesses are caught. They are stuck.

Eighteen hundred State mandates are choking the ability of the private sector to offer affordable choices, reasonable choices. We have to cut out the redtape. We have to streamline the process itself. We have to get rid of the waste and abuse in the system.

We all know that small businesses are the engine of economic growth in our economy. These small businesses are where innovation occurs and these innovators create 60 to 80 percent of all new jobs nationwide. They generate more than 50 percent of the gross domestic product. In my home State of Tennessee, 97 percent of all businesses are small businesses. This aspect of affordable health care is their No. 1 concern.

It makes sense that if we want to expand health care coverage, if we want to diminish the number of uninsured, we need to start to at least make a major advance in an area where we know we can make a difference, and that is where the jobs are. That is why the Enzi-Nelson-Burns small business health insurance bill that we bring to the floor and will formally open debate on here in about an hour is so important.

I want to applaud Chairman ENZI for his tremendous work to pull people together on both sides of the aisle to address these issues. This bill represents the first real, major, solid step to end the small business health plan stalemate that has characterized this body

in over a decade. Its purpose is to deliver meaningful reform for millions of Americans employed in the small business sector.

Under this plan, small business firms would be able to combine their negotiating power and to group that negotiating power in a way that purchasing clout can be used to purchase more affordable plans. By allowing that to happen, they could reduce the cost of health insurance by as much as \$1,000 per employee, while reducing the number of uninsured, people who are uninsured today, by more than 1 million. The CBO recently estimated the Enzi-Nelson-Burns plan would increase Federal revenue by \$3.3 billion between 2007 and 2016, while saving States an estimated \$600 million in Medicaid spending during the same period.

I know this is a very important bill. I am delighted that we will begin on this bill in an hour, or a little over an hour from now. It will be a substantive debate and will go right to the heart of a major problem facing this country, and that is the uninsured. It will address the issues of cost, access, and quality. I encourage Members on both sides of the aisle to participate in this debate, to stay on the issues—we are talking about small business health reform—to not bring in extraneous issues, and with that pass a very important and substantive bill for the American people.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the problem with the Enzi bill is laid out in great detail in a report filed by the minority of the HELP Committee. This is not a question of my not liking the bill, it is not a question of Democrats versus Republicans, it is a question of the bill not being good. It is not a good bill, as indicated by 41 attorneys general. Forty-one attorneys general have signed letters saying the Enzi bill is not good for their States. These attorneys general are from Democratic States and Republican States. Insurance commissioners from around the country have acknowledged that the bill is not a good bill. The bill is opposed by 206 different advocacy groups and health care organizations, disability groups, and professional organizations.

For example, we know that the American Association of Retired People opposes this legislation. I was able to speak to Mr. Novelli a couple of times about this bill while it was moving through the system, and AARP believes the bill is very hurtful to senior citizens, as well as the Small Business Majority, the National Health Council, and the Lance Armstrong Foundation. As I said, more than 200 different orga-

nizations think this legislation is bad for the American people.

I have been led to believe that when this bill is brought to the floor, the 30 hours doesn't expire postcloture on the motion to proceed until sometime this afternoon. We have agreed to go to the bill at an earlier time. But it is not going to give the people in our country the opportunity to move forward on progressive, strong legislation. We will be stuck with the Enzi bill, and AARP doesn't think it is going to go anywhere. The amendments will be controlled by Senator ENZI. If he likes the amendment, he will allow us to offer it. If he doesn't, he won't. I submit that is not the way we should move forward on legislation brought forward during Health Care Week dealing with health care reform.

There are many issues related to health care we need to deal with. There are issues that are so fundamental to what is going on in the country today, and we believe the proposal put forward by Senator LINCOLN from Arkansas, the ranking member of the Finance Committee, Senator BAUCUS, and of course a person who has worked very hard on this legislation for months, Senator DURBIN, should be the legislation we debate. But it will not be. We should have the opportunity to offer amendments relating to postponing the May 15 cutoff line of the eligibility for Medicare drug benefits. That is not going to be allowed.

We should be able to offer legislation dealing with the ability of Medicare to be competitive and bid for drugs at a lower price. That won't be able to be offered.

We should be able to offer an amendment dealing with stem cell research, giving hope to millions of Americans. We won't be able to do that. That is unfortunate.

Walking into the Chamber today, I was asked by someone: Tell us what you stand for. I think, rather than what I stand for, what we stand for as a minority, it is who we stand for. I think that is the direction we should be focusing: Who do we stand for?

There are lots of people we stand for. We stand for parents with no health care. We stand for those people with maladies who are crying out for some research on stem cells so we can move forward finding cures for these diseases—Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, diabetes.

We stand for children who are attending failing schools because the Bush administration refuses to put money into the schools that needs it. It is reported today that very soon there will be 10,000 schools in America that will be failing. I don't think that speaks well. Why are they failing? It is because of this Leave No Child Behind Act that the President pushed so hard.

We stand for the soccer mom who, today, someplace, is going to fill up her vehicle with gasoline and find the price is prohibitive. Rather than filling up her tank, she will fill it half full,

enough to get through maybe the rest of this week, because the cost of gasoline is so high.

We stand for the high school graduates putting off being able to go to college because they simply can't afford the tuition. During the last 5½ years of this administration, college costs have gone up 40 percent. Student aid has been cut. Pell grants have been cut.

We stand for the guardsman who is concerned because he has been called back for the second tour of duty in Iraq. Reading the Washington Post today, I find that two Nevada soldiers were killed in Iraq yesterday, both from Las Vegas, a 46-year-old man and a 26-year-old man—killed yesterday.

We stand for the grandparents who are concerned about the debt this country is accumulating, recognizing their grandchildren will be forced to pay this debt. How big is the debt? During the 5½ years President Bush has been President, the national debt has almost doubled, now approaching \$10 trillion. We just raised the debt ceiling to \$9 trillion, and through some shuffling in the Republican-dominated House they have, in the last few days, raised that to \$10 trillion.

We stand for senior citizens who are unable to have the proper medicine to take care of themselves.

The part that is so concerning is that we are doing nothing in this Congress to address the issues. There are editorials running around the country today talking about the majority, the Republicans, not raising issues of any kind because the debate is one they know they can't win. We need to be focusing on the high cost of energy and high cost of education. We need to focus on global warming, and we are not. It is being ignored because in the minds in the White House, it doesn't exist. We need to focus on this staggering debt. Remember, during the last 3 years of the Clinton administration, we paid down the debt. We were spending less money than we were taking in. That is certainly not the case now.

We are going to have a so-called debate on health care this week, but it is a so-called debate. It is really not a debate because we are being prohibited from offering amendments of significance. We are going to be forced to focus only on the Enzi legislation, which is a flawed bill. It is so flawed that it took the minority in the HELP Committee about 250 pages to outline the problems with this legislation. Usually minority reports are very short. This one is not. It is not because the consequences of the Enzi bill are so significant. This report looks at every State and indicates how every State is hurt as a result of the Enzi legislation.

I look forward to maybe a change of heart. Maybe there will be the ability for us to offer amendments. That doesn't appear to be the case. I hope that it is the case, that we will be allowed to offer amendments. That is the way we should deal with Health Care

Week and not be stymied at offering amendments to this legislation, amendments that would really help—help those people who need help, not only with the hope of curing dread diseases but with the hope of 46 million people in America who have no health insurance, the senior citizens who hope they will be able to get prescription drugs at a lower rate, but because of the Medicare bill passed by this Republican-dominated town, Medicare cannot even negotiate for lower prices. They have to go to Rite Aid and buy their drugs like everyone else. HMOs can negotiate to lower prices because the legislation was directed toward managed care, not those Medicare recipients who badly need help.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. There is now 30 minutes under the control of the majority leader or his designee.

Who yields time?

The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, are we in morning business?

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. We are now in morning business for 30 minutes under the control of the majority leader or his designee.

Mr. CRAIG. I ask unanimous consent to speak for 10 minutes.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ENERGY

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I come on the heels of the minority leader speaking about or at least attempting to define what he and his party believe in. I watched him struggle this morning to try to shape what they are versus what we are, and that is really what we heard discussed a few moments ago. But he kept going back to the issue of high energy costs and the soccer moms and their inability to fill their gas tanks today. So I am going to focus on that part of what he struggled to define this morning and speak to the realities that are out there and what has transpired over the last several decades as it relates to the inability of this country to produce energy and why that inability exists.

A couple of weeks ago, I came to the Senate floor to inform this Senate and awaken America to the reality that just 50 miles off the coast of Florida, China is drilling for oil—Not the United States but China. And the reason China is drilling for oil is that we have prohibited our own companies from the opportunity to drill in the northern Cuban zone, so that Cuba is now leasing out to other countries in the world except the United States.

Then I watched a rush to judgment on the other side as there was a flurry to say not only do we have to stop Cuba, we dare not let America, American companies, experts in deepwater drilling, experts in environmental soundness, ever drill in that region.

Today I wish to expand on that idea. I wish to talk about why America is in trouble today with energy and why that soccer mom is paying more at the gas pump today than she ever has. The answer is really right here. It happened right here in the Senate over the last several decades, starting in 1950.

From the 1800s to 1950, we were energy independent. We were the great producer of oil. But as folks came home from World War II and as our economy began to expand, we began to use more oil. Then, starting in the 1960s and 1970s, we began to say about oil: We need it, but we can't drill here and we can't drill there and we will drill elsewhere.

Here is our problem today, so clearly defined in a supply and demand environment in which we have become 60 percent dependent upon foreign countries to produce our energy for us. America now knows that. Two weeks ago, we watched the other side blame and blame again somebody, including this administration, for a failure to produce. But they failed to tell you what they had not done, had denied over the last two or three decades.

I went to the White House during the Clinton years and asked President Clinton to work with us, to floor what we call marginal wells in west Texas and Oklahoma so they could continue to produce. Why? Because oil was below \$18 a barrel and there was no economy there. They couldn't make money and they were shutting the wells in. We said: Let's floor it and keep them producing.

We couldn't do it because of the politics of that Democratic administration. What happened? Those wells went off line. They were filled with concrete, and they stopped producing what would be a million barrels of oil a day into this market right now. So to the American consumer who is paying those high gas prices, you are lacking a million barrels a day into our markets by a Democratic administration that denied its happening. Darn it, that is a fact. That is reality.

What transpired during that other time? Let's go on to the next chart that talks about our failure to get certain things happening. The Presiding Officer knows all about ANWR. He knows all about Alaska and Alaskan production. It was Bill Clinton who vetoed, a decade ago, the ANWR bill which would have put upwards of 10 billion barrels into the market at about a million barrels a day. Let's do the math now. We shut in a million barrels a day in Texas and Oklahoma because of the politics of that administration, and then they vetoed ANWR at 10 billion or a million a day. That is 2 million barrels a day to which they said no. So the answer to the minority leader as to why the soccer moms are paying the highest price ever today for gas is quite simple. It is because they said no. They said no to stripper wells, they said no to ANWR.

Now let's talk about the rest of the story because what I am interested in